

INSPECTION REPORT

COTMANHAY INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL

Ilkeston

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112570

Headteacher: Jill Boyle

Lead inspector: Peter McGregor

Dates of inspection: 17th – 20th May 2004

Inspection number: 255892

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	269
School address:	Beauvale Drive Ilkeston Derbyshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Sabina Malik
Date of previous inspection:	June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Cotmanhay is a mixed, community infant school. It has achieved a basic skills quality mark, Investors in People status and a schools achievement award. The school is of a similar size to other primary schools, with 269 pupils on roll, aged three to seven. There are similar numbers of girls and boys. Almost all the pupils are white. A very small number of pupils are from mixed and Asian backgrounds. English is the mother tongue for nearly all pupils at the school. A very small number of pupils are at an early stage of acquiring English. Just under half the pupils have special educational needs, which is above average compared with England as a whole. These pupils' needs are mainly moderate learning or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, speech or communication difficulties and physical disability. An above average proportion has a Statement of special educational need. Almost half the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well above the national average. The school had a high turnover of pupils with more starting or leaving during the school year than in most schools. The area around the school is socially and economically very disadvantaged. The school has children of all levels of ability and experience, but most of them start school with very much lower levels of knowledge and skills than are usually seen.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3525	Peter McGregor	Lead inspector	Mathematics, Science, Design and technology, Physical education, Personal, social and health education and citizenship
34164	Julia Hammond	Lay inspector	
10226	Sue Senior	Team inspector	Foundation Stage, Art, Geography, Music
32652	Ann Parham	Team inspector	English, Information and communication technology, History, Religious education, Special educational needs, English as an additional language

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Cotmanhay is an excellent school. Many of the pupils have experienced great deprivation and the school programme provides an excellent stability and structure in their lives. This enables them to make very effective progress in all areas of learning, no matter what their individual difficulties or previous experience. The quality of teaching is very good, with much that is excellent. This results in pupils achieving very well, raising their overall level of performance from extremely low standards on entry to well below average attainment by the time they move on to their next school. The staff commitment to, and care for, all pupils is outstanding and both staff and pupils thoroughly enjoy being at school. The staff team work together exceptionally well as a result of excellent leadership and management. The school provides excellent value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Teaching is excellent in the Nursery and Years 1 and 2
- The leadership team guides, supports and monitors the work of the school in an outstanding way, providing excellent role models for all staff
- The improvement pupils make in their personal development, their knowledge and understanding of maths and in their reading and writing is excellent
- Pupils have very good attitudes and behaviour as a result of the excellent caring approach of all the staff
- The curriculum is very well planned and innovative, and matched to the needs of the pupils
- Leadership and management of subjects is extremely effective, involving rigorous assessment procedures and monitoring
- Despite the efforts of the school and external agencies, which are resulting in improvements, attendance remains below average
- The very effective use of interactive whiteboards with all classes has a great impact on pupils' achievements

Very good progress has been made since the last inspection six years ago. The school now has an excellent scheme of work for English and marking of pupils' work is very good, whereas both these aspects were weaknesses in 1998. Strengths have been maintained or improvements made in most areas of school life. Particularly good improvements have been made in teaching, and therefore pupils' achievements, pupils' attitudes and personal development, and in the use of interactive whiteboard ICT to motivate and involve pupils in their learning.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
reading	E	E	E	C
writing	E	E	D	B
mathematics	E	E	E	B

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals*

The table indicates that, although standards were well below those expected nationally, the pupils did well compared with schools where a similar number of pupils take free school meals. When account is taken of the standards on entry, inspectors found that the **pupils' achievement was much better than the table indicates and very good overall.** Pupils achieve well overall in the Foundation Stage (combined Nursery and Reception Years), making very good progress in the Nursery and achieving satisfactorily in Reception. Achievement is excellent in the Nursery in personal development, language and literacy and in mathematical development. Even with the good progress they make, few children will attain the goals they are expected to meet by the start of Year 1, because so many enter the school with such very low standards. In Years 1 and 2, achievement is

very good indeed, and excellent in maths, reading and writing, and many aspects of personal development. Achievement is very good in other subjects, such as science, ICT and religious education. Pupils with special educational needs are doing very well. Overall, pupils are currently attaining standards well below expectations for their ages but the small number of very capable pupils attain well above average standards. **Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural maturity is very good.** It is difficult to achieve excellence when a number of parents are uninterested in their children's education. Pupils develop very good attitudes to their learning and behave very well. These characteristics stem from the excellent role models of the leadership team, supported by all staff in lessons and around the school. The staff value every pupil and try to meet their individual development needs. The role of the nurture groups and support for the many pupils with special educational needs are key to this success. Overall, attendance and punctuality are good. Attendance figures have been too low, due to the very poor attendance of a few, but are improving as a result of very good initiatives the school is carrying out.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. The quality of teaching is very good overall. In the Foundation Stage teaching and learning are good overall, and excellent in Years 1 and 2. In all areas of learning and subjects, teaching is good or better. The greatest strengths in teaching are the staff's high expectations, the structure they provide and excellent assessment systems. The planning, energy and drive, which all staff contribute, help pupils to learn as well as they can. The very good curriculum is innovative, broad and balanced, enriched by a very good range of clubs and visits and visitors to the school. Excellent use is made of the very high quality staffing, of resources and of accommodation (some of which is barely satisfactory). All staff have extremely caring attitudes towards the pupils, providing very good guidance and support. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good and help all pupils to feel valued and secure and to achieve very well. The school's attitude to its partnership with the parents is excellent. The majority react very positively and are very appreciative of how the school works with them; a significant number of parents do not respond in a helpful way. Partnerships with the local community are good. The school has good procedures to help the pupils move on to their next school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are excellent. Governance is good, with some significant strengths. Governors know the school very well and are becoming increasingly involved, providing challenge as well as support. Governors carry out all their statutory duties. The headteacher provides a very clear direction for the school, one of striving for excellence. She is exceptionally well supported by an extremely effective senior team. Monitoring and evaluation by senior managers and subject leaders is rigorous and successful, resulting in very effective teaching and very good achievement overall. Subject leadership and management are excellent.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The few parents who attended the meeting about the school and those that returned their questionnaires were very pleased with the quality of education provided for their children. Pupils in discussions with inspectors expressed the same views. Parents and pupils both said that the school gave them a 'very good deal' and the greatest asset was the caring staff who teach so well.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- There are no significant improvements needed, though the school needs to continue working with external agencies and parents to improve pupils' attendance further

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' achievement is very good overall. In the Nursery and Years 1 and 2, achievement is very good indeed, and satisfactory overall in the Reception classes. Many of the children enter the Nursery with exceptionally little of the knowledge and understanding expected of children their age and very few skills. By the age of seven, they have made very good progress though, when compared to national expectations, standards are well below average. The small number of very capable pupils attain well above average standards.

Main strengths

- Pupils' achievements are excellent in maths, reading and writing, and many aspects of personal development
- The focus on developing language skills is proving very helpful in improving pupils' standards
- Pupils with special educational needs do very well because they are very effectively supported
- The school's results in the tests taken at the age of seven are improving faster than results are nationally

Commentary

1. Compared with schools that had a similar proportion of pupils taking free school meals, national test standards in 2003 were above average in writing and maths and broadly average in reading. Pupils' attainment was well below the national average for all schools but relatively higher, and below average, in writing.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	14.5 (13.8)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	13.8 (12.7)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	15.3 (14.9)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 66 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
2. The entry standard into the school varies from year to year and has fallen over recent years to a very low level, as the area around the school has become increasingly run down, with many boarded-up houses. A higher than average proportion of the pupils have arrived or left at times other than the start or end of the school year and about four percent of the pupils have very serious attendance problems which the school has great difficulty in resolving. These problems have a significant effect on test results and on how the school's results compare with other schools nationally.
3. Test results show that the more capable pupils do very well, gaining level 3. The grouping together of pupils of broadly similar ability for teaching in Years 1 and 2 is an important element in the school's success in achieving this. A relatively high proportion of pupils attain level 1, which is below the standard expected of seven year-olds. This is a very good outcome for these pupils who have very weak speaking and listening skills when they start Nursery and minimal, if any, understanding of number. Boys have done less well than girls in reading and writing overall, although the difference is

less pronounced than that seen nationally. Boys' results in maths have been better than those of girls in recent years.

4. In the Foundation Stage, currently, achievement is good overall. In the Nursery, children's achievements are very good with some excellent aspects in all six areas of learning. The Nursery work in personal development, language and literacy and in mathematical development is excellent because the teaching is so effective. In knowledge and understanding of the world, and physical and creative development, children's achievements are very good. In the Reception classes achievements are sound or better in all six areas and satisfactory overall, with some variation between classes. By the end of the Foundation Stage, when they leave the Reception class at age five plus, children have attained standards that are well below average and few pupils will reach the early learning goals.
5. In Years 1 and 2, achievement is very good overall. In some lessons it was excellent and it was never less than good. Achievement in mathematics is excellent and it is very good in English, science and religious education, though in all these subjects standards are well below average because of the pupils' very low starting point. In English, achievement in reading and writing is excellent. The focus on developing pupils' speaking as well as their listening skills is improving standards in writing and helping them to understand the work in other subjects such as religious education, geography and science. In religious education some pupils have average or better recall of facts about religions, but very little understanding of the effect of religions on peoples' lives. Pupils' achievement in ICT is very good. ICT standards are below expectations in terms of the pupils' skills in word processing, but their understanding of the value of ICT as a tool for learning is above average as a result of their use of interactive whiteboards. Overall ICT standards are below average. The very small number of pupils at an early stage of learning English progress as well as other pupils in these subjects.
6. In physical education, music and art, insufficient evidence was collected to give an overall judgement about standards and achievement. In the activities seen, standards were similar to national expectations and achievements were very good. In the geography sampled, pupils were also achieving very well because the teaching was so effective. However, standards are well below expectations because many pupils have very weak language skills and a lot of difficulty remembering what they have learnt. In design and technology and history not enough evidence was available to make judgements on standards and achievements.
7. The many pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and their achievements are very good. Very good, and at times excellent, support staff work closely with class teachers and specialist support teachers to try to ensure work is matched to needs. This very high quality teaching, and the substantial support given in a nurture room to pupils who find it particularly difficult to cope with school or who are most disadvantaged, results in pupils who have a growing confidence in their ability to learn. They make particularly substantial improvements in their personal development, English and maths. Those with behavioural problems learn to accept the school's rules, and adapt their behaviour accordingly.
8. Since the last inspection, boys' standards have improved relative to girls, and the pupils' achievements overall, relative to their capabilities, are higher than six years ago. Standards are lower, as they are on entry to the school. Overall good progress has been made since 1998 in improving pupils' standards of achievement.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils enjoy school, have very good attitudes to their learning and behave very well. The provision for their personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, is excellent. Pupils' personal development by the age of seven is very good. Attendance and punctuality are good overall.

Main strengths

- The excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision for all the pupils is an integral part of all teaching and learning
- Positive reinforcement of good habits in learning as well as playing helps to promote very good behaviour throughout the school

- Attendance and punctuality are improving rapidly and although still below average, very good procedures are in place to try to make further improvements

Commentary

- The pupils are very well behaved and friendly. They greatly enjoy school - "because you learn and have fun", as a group of Year 2 pupils said. They are encouraged to learn as the lessons are very well planned and pupils are very well supported by teaching and support staff. They are proud of their achievements and are encouraged to do their best through a deeply embedded culture of collective and individual praise for both work and behaviour. Pupils are keen to take responsibility for tasks around school and for themselves. They behave very well because the atmosphere of the school is calm and orderly at all times. From the Nursery onwards, there is a very strong emphasis on the kind of behaviour expected from parents and pupils alike, which provides a very supportive background to learning. The parents appreciate the standards of behaviour which are expected of their children. In the Foundation Stage, the playground is very well supervised and the adults are fully involved in the activities. Good behaviour outside school is also encouraged and it is frequently commented on positively by observers when the pupils are out on trips.
- The notion of respecting and caring for one another and for allowing for differences between people is built into teaching and learning. It is also made memorable through role-playing stories in assemblies. The pupils have very good relationships with each other, and work readily in groups or with partners. The pupils' confidence and self-esteem are constantly reinforced by classroom activities such as admiring and constructively criticising each other's work and by teacher approval. Parents are particularly aware of the quality of the nurturing of those with low self-esteem and praise the staff for what they do to help. The nurture room, referred to as the 'blue room', to distinguish it from the 'yellow' or 'sunshine' special needs base, provides very good support for the personal development of the most disadvantaged pupils in the school. A similar very good quality of support is provided through special educational needs teaching.
- The promotion of spiritual, moral, cultural and social development of the pupils is excellent, because it is part and parcel of so many lessons and underpins the way adults and pupils deal with one another. Spiritual moments included looking at a candle for about a minute before writing a poem about light. The pupils were very quiet and reflective and took the exercise very seriously. Pupils in all classes say a prayer before lunch each day in a quiet and thoughtful manner. They follow the excellent role models that all adults provide as they say the prayers with feeling. From the earliest age, the pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong, while through assemblies the value of kindness and care are reinforced. In an excellent assembly, a group of pupils acted out the parable of the Good Samaritan and the whole school voiced their agreement that it is very important to "be kind and help each other". A pupil wrote a story that night about the assembly and how important it was to her and gave it to the headteacher; other pupils talked about it, showing their concern and understanding for right and wrong. The outcome of this excellent work is the very good development for the pupils, from a very low base point of maturity on entry to the school.
- The pupils are introduced to their local culture through visits and visitors. These are appreciated by the pupils, many of whom spend little if any time away from the very local area. Visits to churches and other religious buildings, to museums and a castle are very important to the pupils' development. The visit of an artist to the school led to an upsurge in interest in art and great enjoyment and excitement. A dancer from Kenya, a story-teller in book week and someone to talk about the religious festival of Divali are other examples of visitors to the school who have enriched the pupils' understanding of the wider world. The pupils' eyes are opened to other cultures through creative role-play, particularly the India areas in several classrooms, and wall displays.

Exclusions

- No pupils were temporarily or permanently excluded from the school in the past year.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
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School data	6.2
National data	5.4

School data	2.9
National data	0.4

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

14. Attendance was very low last year but has improved greatly in the current year to a below average figure. Several very effective procedures have been introduced. These include well-kept registers, parents being contacted immediately when their children are absent, and follow-up work with the education welfare office to investigate persistent absenteeism. Data on classes and individuals is analysed in great detail so that evidence of problems is clearly identified. The importance of regular attendance is emphasised to the parents in their individual home school agreement as well as being on display in the school. The school is in a difficult situation with a small minority of parents, however, when young pupils want to come to school but their parents, for example, refuse to get up in the morning and bring them. Despite the school's considerable and appropriate efforts with parents, the attendance of a small number of pupils spread over Reception and Years 1 and 2 remains at an extremely poor level. Prosecutions are being prepared in the most extreme cases, for example when a pupil's unauthorised absences reached a level of over seventy in two terms.
15. The pupils know the importance of regular attendance because they understand that if they miss school they will get behind with their work. They are encouraged to attend regularly through the award of individual certificates to take home, as well as whole-class certificates which are displayed in school, with the added bonus of a short extra playtime. The vast majority of pupils are punctual and keen to come to school. Further initiatives to improve attendance and punctuality involve the forthcoming new entrance. Its design will make it easier to identify and challenge latecomers.
16. Since the last report in 1998 attitudes, behaviour and personal development have improved significantly. Attendance is lower but improving rapidly because the new systems are much more effective.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good. It has many considerable strengths including a very high proportion of very good and excellent teaching and excellent assessment systems. The curriculum is very good. It is broad and balanced and includes many visits and visitors. Pupils receive very good guidance and support; and staff work extremely hard to develop links with parents. All of these contribute to the very good achievement of the pupils.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good, with no significant areas of weaknesses and many outstanding strengths. The teaching in the Nursery and Years 1 and 2 is excellent, and it is satisfactory in the Reception classes. Assessment is excellent throughout the school.

Main strengths

- Where teaching is excellent, it is both enthusiastic and challenging
- Support staff are very effective in helping pupils to learn
- Pupils' behaviour is managed in an excellent manner
- Teachers and support staff use interactive whiteboards very effectively for the benefit of the pupils

Commentary

17. An exceptionally high proportion of very good and excellent teaching was seen at Cotmanhay. In the Foundation Stage, the quality of teaching is good overall. In lessons, it varied between sound and excellent. Teaching was excellent where the planning was detailed and work was matched to needs. Pupils' language was constantly being reinforced, pupils were involved in using the interactive whiteboard, and learning support staff were used most effectively in the teaching.
18. In an early afternoon session in the Nursery, focusing on mathematical development, the children's learning was excellent. Frequent use of 'one more than' and repetition of numbers to ten in different

contexts, resulted in very highly motivated and involved children. Modern resources, such as a radio-controlled car, which the children had to place on a particular numbered square, and an interactive whiteboard with a high quality counting program of motivating graphics, were complemented by counting with small plastic teddies! When children started tasks individually they were strongly encouraged to finish them, and they then appreciated their success. In lessons such as this, the teacher and support staff worked extremely hard, and with sustained enthusiasm. The children responded with commitment and interest, and their behaviour was excellent.

19. Where lessons were sound, but not as stimulating and demanding, the work was not as well planned and, during group work, not all groups worked to their full capacity. This reflected the inexperience of a few staff and the demanding nature of several of the pupils. These pupils, although well adjusted to the very high expectations in the school, nevertheless have very short concentration spans for learning and easily get distracted if not under direct adult supervision.
20. In Years 1 and 2, the quality of teaching varied between good and excellent and a significant proportion of the learning was excellent. Teachers and their support staff worked unceasingly to motivate and involve the pupils, to interest them in the work, whatever the subject matter. As in the Nursery, puppets are used frequently to reinforce routines. When a 'cuddly' green frog appears in one classroom and makes his customary noise, all pupils chant, "What are we going to do today?" and wait intently and patiently to find out. Other classes have similar very successful routines that assist in developing appropriate behaviour.
21. The very successful teaching characteristics observed in these classes include
 - Rigorous and positive systems that helped to ensure pupils' behaviour was always good or better; pupils learn to accept school rules and procedures as beneficial to them
 - Teachers' very good understanding of their subjects and how pupils learn
 - A considered, unflustered approach, providing a role model for a number of pupils
 - Very detailed and effective planning, which resulted in very carefully structured lessons and gave the pupils great confidence in their teachers
 - Very effective involvement of support staff in teaching groups in most classes
 - Excellent use of resources, particularly the interactive whiteboards
 - Excellent pace in lessons and high expectations of all pupils, whatever their capabilities
 - Excellent questioning enabling teachers to know what pupils did and did not understand
 - Carefully selected strategies for each lesson which maintained interest and motivation
 - The use of teacher-generated seating plans, which resulted in efficient learning
22. Classrooms have additional areas referred to as 'learning zones', which are used very effectively. Small areas of the classroom are set aside for writing, making things, maths work and other activities, in addition to the usual reading, role-play and ICT centres. When work is finished early or a change in direction is needed in the lesson, pupils move to one of these centres. In a Year 1 maths session, the planned work was finished early and pupils were then allocated to learning zones before the start of the next lesson. Pupils are developing high order independent learning skills through this work and are extending their own knowledge through the activities they carry out.
23. All pupils are valued and known well, whether they have special educational needs, are very capable, are boys or girls, or are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Teachers try to match work to all their needs with the result that pupils feel involved and aspire to achieve well. The balance of class, group and individual work is excellent, with many interesting strategies used to capture the imagination. Pupils' approaches as a result are very positive. They learn how to learn, through concentration and determined effort in most cases. The school prides itself on the 'intervention strategies' it uses to assist pupils in learning. The nurture room and special educational needs centre have expert staff who give time to the individual, focusing on personal development, language and maths. Pupils' reintegration into their classes after these sessions is very effective. Staff are aware that it often takes a long time to help pupils to change their attitudes and behaviour and improve their learning. They persevere very skilfully with pupils, building on each small achievement.
24. Teachers question pupils most effectively, finding out what pupils do and do not understand. Marking is very good and pupils appreciate the comments made by staff. Assessment records are exceptionally detailed and used to excellent effect to plan what should next be taught. Assessment in the Foundation Stage, and for English and maths, is extremely rigorous and frequent, enabling staff to identify progress and where remedial action is needed. Pupils' achievements and standards are carefully tracked as they progress through the school. Records for science, religious education and the foundation subjects are not as detailed as for English and maths, but are realistic records of what has been achieved and are very good indeed.
25. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved substantially since the last inspection in 1998.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 38 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6 (16%)	19 (50%)	9 (24%)	4 (11%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

The curriculum

The breadth and the balance of the curriculum are very good. A very good range of enrichment activities extends pupils' learning beyond the classroom. The quality of the accommodation is satisfactory, resources are good and the staffing excellent. The use made of the buildings, resources and staff is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The arrangements for grouping pupils by ability in classes and in groups within classes are very effective
- The curriculum and resources available meet the needs of the very high number of pupils with special educational needs
- An excellent outdoor play area makes a significant contribution to younger pupils' learning
- The pupils enjoy a very good range of visits and visitors to the school, and extra-curricular activities
- Two classrooms are too small (one lacks a supply of water) and the library is also too small
- Interactive whiteboard digital projectors are not secured in several rooms which results in disruptions in learning

Commentary

26. The Foundation Stage curriculum includes all the expected areas, with a very strong emphasis on personal development, communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development. A balance is retained however, with a very good range of work in creative and physical areas of learning and in the knowledge and understanding of the world. The excellent outdoor area provides a stimulating environment which is used to very good effect by all the children. The curriculum includes the best of what is new, such as the children using interactive whiteboards, and the best of traditional elements, such as excellent role-play areas.
27. The Year 1 and 2 curriculum is also broad and well balanced, covering all required areas of the National Curriculum and religious education, with a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development through specific lessons and circle time. Subjects such as physical education, music and art have good amounts of time, even with the focus on English and maths. Well-considered topics are used to cover subjects such as history, geography, design and technology and science. The topics enable the pupils to see the connections between subjects. ICT skills are effectively planned for through the use of interactive whiteboards and as a result of specific ICT lessons. Some good use is made of the classroom-based computers, such as for sentence making in Year 1 and design of stained glass window effects in art.
28. Timetables are well planned to make efficient use of the hall for physical education and to provide a balance of work in morning and afternoon sessions. The arrangements to group pupils into classes broadly by their standards in English and maths, and then to group pupils further within classes by their abilities, are very effective.
29. Curriculum planning for each subject is detailed and very helpful, particularly to staff new to a topic or year group. Plans are carefully annotated and stored from one year to the next, to enable colleagues to learn from past successes. The quality of planning for English is excellent and a great improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection.
30. Innovations, like the implementation of interactive whiteboards, the nurture room, and the introduction of zones into classrooms with time available to use them, enhance the curriculum. Other initiatives include the establishment of the excellent outdoor adventurous play area for the Foundation Stage,

the refurbishment of some wasteland into an attractive quiet garden area for the Nursery, and planned and funded changes for the Year 1 and 2 playground.

31. A very good range of clubs is provided both before and after the school day. The excellent breakfast club has a positive effect on the pupils and is well run by efficient staff. Pupils are able to buy a nutritious meal and then play games independently or with each other. There is a calm, organised atmosphere. Other clubs include recorder, computer, art and a before-school physical education club, which includes healthy living. The curriculum is further enriched through a wide range of visits and visitors. Pupils recall many of these with great enthusiasm, indicating their success in enriching the curriculum.
32. The school provides very well for pupils with special educational needs. The curriculum meets their needs, the code of practice is fully met, and the administration and organisation are very good. Team planning and involvement of outside agencies are of a high standard. Tracking documents are detailed and fully used by staff. All these pupils have full access to the curriculum.
33. The quality of staffing is an extremely valuable resource within the school. The number, qualifications and experience of teachers and other classroom staff match the demands of the curriculum. Roles and responsibilities are clear. Support staff are involved in training and planning. They are highly skilled and make a very good contribution to pupils' learning. There is a strong feeling of teamwork that includes all members of staff, whether they are in the office, the kitchen or working with the pupils.
34. Arrangements for the induction, appraisal and professional development of all staff are very effective. New staff are mentored and quickly become established members of the team. Performance management is carried out according to policy and includes support staff. Monitoring activities enable co-ordinators to identify professional development needs and these are then addressed. Staff development is part of the school improvement plan.
35. The school's accommodation is sufficient to enable the curriculum to be taught. A programme of developments has enabled the school to make maximum use of the building and grounds. There are two very small classrooms and one of them has no access to a sink or running water. This makes teaching difficult but, because of the endeavours of the teachers, the shortcomings have little impact on pupils' learning. There are plans for further changes and improvement to the entrance and for the playground. The library is used by each class at least once a week but it is too small and when a whole class is in there it is difficult for them to move around when choosing their new books. Staff provide a very attractive and stimulating learning environment in each of their classrooms. Classrooms and shared areas are bright with bold, attractive, stimulating displays. The school is very well cared for by the cleaning staff and the pupils respect the environment in which they work and play. The building has been modified to provide access for pupils with disabilities.
36. Learning resources are good and match the needs of pupils and the curriculum. They are easily accessible to pupils in the classrooms and some are carefully stored centrally in boxes for future reference. Resources are regularly audited and updated by co-ordinators. The school has a good stock of artefacts. ICT facilities are very good but, because digital projectors are not secured in some of the classrooms, interruptions occur in teaching and learning.
37. The curriculum, staffing, resources and accommodation were good overall, with several very good aspects, six years ago. Today, strengths have been maintained and improvements made in areas such as the outdoor play facility for the Foundation Stage, the increased provision of ICT resources and much-improved curriculum planning in English.

Care, guidance and support

All staff have extremely caring attitudes towards the pupils and relationships between pupils and staff are very good. The very good guidance and support enables all pupils to achieve very well.

Main strengths

- An excellent approach to care supports pupils very well, making them feel valued and secure
- Induction arrangements for pupils entering the Nursery are very good
- Excellent guidance and support for pupils with behaviour difficulties help them to achieve
- Very good health and safety procedures are in place

Commentary

38. The pupils' care and welfare are excellent because the staff focus on all their needs, even those beyond the classroom, such as the movement from school to home. The pupils are encouraged to eat healthily as fresh fruit is provided daily, as is a regular supply of drinking water. The school has excellent child protection policies in place supported by regular training for staff, aware of their importance in a school where many pupils are from very disadvantaged backgrounds.
39. The support and guidance for pupils is very good. They are very well supported within the school and they have confidence in all the adults around them. Pupils remarked how happy they were in the school and the quality of the staff was the single most important factor in that happiness.
40. Learning is very well supported. Homework is regularly marked and pupils are made aware of how they are progressing. Personal development in work and behaviour is positively rewarded by 'treats', and star charts which are kept updated to provide pupils with new incentives. The very good nurture of pupils with behaviour problems through the existence of the blue room, providing structured 'time out' for those who need it, benefits all pupils. It supports the individuals who attend while allowing other pupils to work without disruption. The induction of new pupils into the school is excellent. Before pupils enter the Foundation Stage, they are visited at home and are invited to visit the school. Parents of the new pupils are required to attend pre-visits, which ensures that they are familiar with the school's ethos and expectations. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of the children and their family circumstances.
41. Pupils are given responsibility in decision making through their school's council as well as for the more practical jobs of checking toilets and clearing tables. The result is they feel involved in their own learning and value the environment where they work and play.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's attitude to its partnership with the parents is excellent. The majority of parents respond with appreciation and commitment, but a sizeable minority do not. Parents have excellent access to the school as well as being given the opportunity to be very well involved as partners in learning. Partnerships with the local community are good, maintained through involvement with appropriate local agencies. The school has good procedures to help pupils move on to their next school and is building stronger links.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school works exceptionally hard with parents to involve them in their children's learning
- A number of parents do not support the learning of their children, which restricts their development and achievement
- Parents receive very good information about the school and their children's progress and achievement
- The school listens very carefully indeed to the parents' and pupils' views and acts upon them

Commentary

42. The school provides all parents with very good information about the school. Expectations of what is and is not acceptable are made very clear regarding behaviour, and attitudes to work and play. From visits before their children start school, onwards, parents are welcomed to join in school life, working alongside their children where appropriate. The parents who take part in these initiatives are very appreciative of what the school offers. Homework is marked well which means parents can be aware of how their children are progressing. Good quality reports give parents clear judgements about how well their children are doing, and good meetings for parents are held each term. Parents particularly appreciate the opportunity the school gives them to be involved in what takes place in the classroom and on visits, and to learn from these experiences. They are confident that their views will be listened to by the school and that the school will do its very best for their children. Several parents at their meeting to discuss the school commented on how they had learnt a number of parenting skills by observing how staff dealt with their children and by talking to the staff.

43. Staff work exceptionally hard at developing effective lines of communication with parents and the majority respond very well to this. A minority of parents, however, make little or no effort to support the school, for example by not following the principles of the attendance policy.
44. The school is well integrated into the local community. It has good links with supporting agencies such as the education welfare officer, the local Sure Start and Barnardo's. Very good use is made of the local community for visits and by asking representatives of local services such as the fire service to visit the school. All the pupils usually transfer to Cotmanhay Junior School which shares the same building. New procedures are being put in place to improve the good links that currently exist. These should make the transfer of pupils easier by, for example, developing similar attitudes to teaching and care in the two schools and by sharing the use of facilities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are excellent. The governance of the school is good, with significant strengths.

Main strengths

- The headteacher provides a very clear sense of direction and is successfully sharing her vision of excellence
- The senior management team are of an exceptionally high quality and take a pivotal role in leading and managing the school
- Managers ensure that all pupils are valued and supported equally well
- Monitoring and evaluation by senior managers and subject leaders is rigorous and effective

Commentary

45. The headteacher had been in place for four months at the time of the inspection. There has been a seamless change as far as the pupils, parents and staff are concerned, from the leadership of the previous head to the current one. The momentum for improvement has been maintained because the headteacher is highly respected and supported by the extremely effective senior management team. The high quality of the senior team results in very effective strategic planning and a strong focus on raising standards further.
46. The headteacher, senior team and all subject co-ordinators rigorously monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in lessons. The information gained from these observations, and from the excellent assessment arrangements, enable staff to plan how the curriculum should be adapted and developed to meet the needs of the pupils. The school values all pupils as individuals and aims at all having an equal chance to benefit from school life. Excellent approaches such as the nurture room and intervention strategies are supporting the most vulnerable and least successful pupils in the school. This support is a key contributory factor in enabling the school standards to continue to rise.
47. The school day runs very smoothly. Procedures are clear and always followed. The leadership team involves all staff and governors in a regular, stringent self-review and evaluation of the development plan which appropriately details the school's priorities for improvement. For example, the focus on the development of an outside play area has resulted in an excellent resource which is an outstanding stimulus to learning. A key characteristic of the school is its cycle of "review, identify improvements, carry them through, and review again".
48. In terms of the standards reached by the pupils, the headteacher, staff and governors have a very clear idea of what the school does well and where it needs to improve. Through the close analysis of results and interim performance data, weaknesses in the teaching of English and maths in the past have been highlighted and very successfully acted upon. Currently, an identified relative weakness in speaking and listening has resulted in intervention strategies for speech and language, a focus on awards for listening skills in the 'Golden Book' and a strong emphasis upon the introduction of technical vocabulary in maths, science and other subjects.
49. The close match of performance management objectives to individual pupil performance targets is very effective in raising standards. Teaching assistants are valued through their involvement in the performance management process and by ensuring that they, like all staff, receive appropriate

professional development. Newly qualified staff are well integrated into the school team by planning with more experienced staff and through receiving high quality mentoring, which includes observations of lessons.

50. Governors are committed to supporting current initiatives, such as focusing on boys' attainment, to improve standards within the school. They carry out their statutory duties and are aware of, and respond to, changes in legislation. They have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the problems of the area which it serves. Several governors have a long association with the locality and the governing body. Since the appointment of the headteacher, committee structures and financial delegations of the governing body have been reviewed so that procedures are clearer. Governors are fully involved in the school self-review process. They carry out their curriculum responsibilities through discussions with co-ordinators and visiting the school to observe teaching themselves. They analyse the school's national test results, agree targets and set appropriate performance objectives for the headteacher. Governors have successfully addressed the issues from the previous inspection.
51. Financial management is excellent because the budget is closely monitored, the school sets clear priorities and it is pro-active in seeking additional funding and development grants. Decision-making supports the school's development plan to ensure that the school is able to maintain the improvements it seeks to achieve.
52. The quality of all staff and their collaborative teamwork is a major factor in raising achievement within the school. Intervention strategies and interactive whiteboards are used very effectively to make learning more accessible to those for whom school presents a challenge. Standards achieved are adversely affected by the lack of interest of a small minority of parents, which impacts on their children's attendance.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	691,623
Total expenditure	716,284
Expenditure per pupil	2,310

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	38,864
Balance carried forward to the next	14,203

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good overall.

53. Children enter the Nursery at a very low level, with very restricted communication skills and extremely low levels of personal development. The provision for learning is good overall and very good in the Nursery, with some areas of excellence, especially in developing language, maths and personal and social skills. Provision in Reception is sound overall, with some good aspects. Children's achievements over their time in the Foundation Stage are good overall. This reflects very good achievement in the Nursery and sound work, with several strengths, in Reception classes. Teaching is good overall. It is excellent in the Nursery and sound in the Reception classes. There are good learning opportunities for children with special educational needs. At the end of the Foundation Stage the majority of children will not meet the early learning goals because they are starting from a very low base on entry to the school but they make considerable progress through the stepping stone levels towards those goals.
54. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are excellent. Leadership is well informed and charismatic which has resulted in the successful welding together of teachers and support staff into a very effective team. Management is systematic, detailed and extremely effective. Comprehensive and analytical assessment and tracking procedures are organised precisely to give teaching colleagues a clear insight into children's progress and achievement and to help determine future learning for each child. Overall, the children are well prepared for their move to Year 1. The judgements in most areas are similar to those made in the last inspection but there have been great improvements in assessment and the outside play area. Overall, progress since 1998 has been good.

Personal, social and emotional development

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is very good.

Main strengths

- Excellent induction procedures establish trust and security
- An ethos of partnership in learning is developed through very good relationships with parents
- Exciting experiences, particularly in the Nursery, stimulate children's curiosity
- Children maintain attention and concentrate; they are learning how to learn

Commentary

55. Many children enter the Nursery with very low self-esteem, very low personal and social skills and little curiosity about the world around them. The whole focus of the school's Foundation Stage provision is "building towards success". Very good routines and structures build confidence and self-esteem. The very successful induction procedures into each stage of the school, the emphasis on the child's welfare and the welcoming atmosphere ensure that parents and children are familiar with their surroundings. Parents and carers trust staff, which enables children to separate from them successfully. Through daily interaction and regular open mornings to share expectations of what and how children learn, the Nursery establishes excellent relationships with parents. This successfully involves them in their children's learning and reinforces expectations of appropriate, good behaviour. Discussions and preparation for well-planned, exciting events, such as the 'bear hunt', which took place during the inspection, stimulate children's curiosity and give them confidence to try new experiences. They achieve very well.
56. Teaching is effective because teachers have high expectations of children's behaviour and achievement. Work for children is planned so that they will achieve and be confident and successful. There are opportunities for more able children to face demanding challenges, in which they can succeed.

57. The very good teaching by classroom adults in the Nursery builds upon trusting relationships to develop the children's ability to make new friendships and become independent in personal care. Staff are sensitive to the children's needs and encourage them to persist with difficult tasks.

Communication, language and literacy

Provision in communication, language and literacy is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Stories are told in a vibrant and most enjoyable manner
- The Nursery provides excellent opportunities for developing speaking skills
- Children in Reception, outside the groups being directly taught by teachers and support staff do not always achieve as well as they could
- The teaching support staff make very good contributions to developing pupils' literacy skills
- Learning zones in classrooms provide very good opportunities for children to practise their literacy skills

Commentary

58. Children enter the school with very limited communication and literacy skills. They achieve well so that, at the end of the Nursery, the majority of children can listen and begin to communicate their ideas through speaking and drawing. Children develop their speaking skills so well in Nursery because all staff have an excellent understanding of how young children learn. They reinforce the same vocabulary in a wide variety of ways and use energy and enthusiasm to engage the children in their learning. Most children in Reception classes are at the early stages of reading and writing but a small group have developed sufficient skill to be close to meeting the early learning goal for literacy. The learning zones provide children with opportunities to reinforce their developing writing skills through recording their ideas or making their own books.
59. The teaching of language and literacy varies from very good to satisfactory. Excellent story telling across the Foundation Stage involves all children so that they can enjoy and develop their language. This inspires children to want to read for themselves. The structured approach to teaching book skills and reading builds upon small successes, such as being able to tell a story to pictures, and gives children a positive impetus to achieve. Reception reading games like North, South, East and West and word lotto reinforce early reading skills of identifying initial sounds and recognising words by sight. The focused, high impact activities make learning fun. In the few less successful but still sound lessons, the content or organisation of the session did not result in a good match of the work to the learning needs of all children. Children who were not the focus for attention of the teacher or support staff during group work wasted some time because expectations of what they should achieve were not clear.

Mathematical development

Provision for mathematical development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent use is made of the interactive whiteboard; the work engages all children
- Observation and assessment are very well used
- There are some missed opportunities to reinforce mathematical concepts
- Number is continually reinforced by teachers and support staff through everyday activities

Commentary

60. Upon entry to the school, children have very little number recognition and a very limited understanding of mathematical concepts. The excellent teaching of maths in the Nursery is energetic, interesting and highly effective. Every avenue is explored in order to demonstrate a concept. The puppet, Bob, plays a key role in teaching! Mathematical language is reinforced very effectively. Children learn because activities are varied, challenging and fun. They achieve very well in number so that, by the time they leave the Nursery, most pupils can count and recognise numbers up to five, a few pupils to a much higher number. Children achieve well across the Foundation Stage because planning is detailed and matched to their individual needs. Observation and assessment

are used very effectively to record what has been achieved and to determine when a child is ready to embark upon the next step in learning. All staff use opportunities for counting and number recognition as they occur, both indoors and outside, to reinforce the systematic teaching of number skills. Quality intervention in children's play, such as extending telephone play to include reading and dialling a number and introducing correct coinage use in shopping, develops children's understanding of the relevance of number to their everyday lives. Where some children pursue independent tasks in Reception classes without some adult intervention or clear guidance, they learn little at these times. The overall quality in the Nursery is much better than in the Reception classes.

61. Excellent use is made of interactive whiteboards, for example in shape and counting activities, as a teaching tool to extend understanding of mathematical language and to motivate the children in their learning. Structured activities are also planned to use terms such as bottom and top, above and below, and heavy and light in practical situations. Important words are reinforced in physical education, art and other areas of the curriculum.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Provision for knowledge and understanding of the world is good.

Main strengths

- Children develop good ICT skills
- Children's curiosity is stimulated through good opportunities for exploratory play
- Good scientific knowledge is developed through first hand observations of nature and the use of materials

Commentary

62. All aspects of this area of learning are developed well through good opportunities for discussion and through stimulating first hand experiences. Children enter the school with little basic knowledge and low curiosity levels. Good teaching and very well planned activities stimulate children's interest to ensure that they achieve well through tasting, touching and examining things with their hands, a hand lens or a digital microscope. They are encouraged to make connections and notice changes that occur, for example, when combining different coloured paints together or moulding clay. Children carefully make books and models, such as binoculars, cameras and cars from re-cycled tubes and boxes, joined with staples, elastic bands, paper fasteners or different types of glue and tape. Valuable first hand experiences of planting seeds and observing the life cycle of the butterfly and tadpole develop a good appreciation of the wonders of nature. Further opportunities to find out about plants, minibeasts and the natural world are fully exploited in the outdoor area.
63. Most children will meet the early learning goal for ICT although overall, in this area, few will meet the standard expected for their age. They find interactive whiteboards very exciting and are confident in using computers. Many children have very good mouse control in drawing, and dragging and dropping. They can change programs and successfully 'drive' a programmable car. The quality of their experience in this area is excellent in the Nursery and good overall in the Reception classes.

Physical development

Provision for physical development is very good.

Main strengths

- The outside play area provides a very high quality resource
- Fruit time contributes to children's understanding of healthy living
- Teaching assistants give valuable support in mastering new skills

Commentary

64. The children's physical development when they enter the Nursery is of a higher standard than other areas; their skills are below average. They achieve very well and most are on course to meet the early learning goal for this area. The outside play area sets children challenges to develop their physical skills in an excellent environment. They can safely take risks, swing down poles, balance along planks and climb and slide. Staff are always there to give support and encouragement for new

skills such as learning to pedal a tricycle. Children handle different sized paintbrushes and rollers with increased control.

65. Teaching is very effective, and very good indeed in some instances. Planning shows very good provision for the development of specific skills such as hand/eye co-ordination, pencil control, cutting, stapling, and manipulating materials, as well as an understanding of the use of space and developing body control. Teachers ensure that there is an element of challenge. Children's individual needs are catered for through appropriate support from teaching assistants in mastering new skills. Discussions of the value of apples, oranges and brown bread at snack time are well used to help children recognise the importance of keeping healthy.

Creative development

Provision for creative development is good.

Main strengths

- Stimulating role-play areas develop the children's imagination
- A wide variety of creative opportunities is provided

Commentary

66. Planning for creative development is clear and well matched to the stepping stones for early learning, so that children are able to develop their creativity through a wide range of activities. The multi-sensory approach to learning allows children to express themselves through all their senses. They are given time to explore and experiment with ideas and materials such as natural objects, recyclable materials, and their own hands and fingers as creative tools. They make interesting collages using a range of well-chosen resources such as fabric, silver paper, tissue, wool and felt. Children have access to a very good range of equipment to paint or draw about their experiences. In Reception classes, they also make very careful pencil drawings of musical instruments and learn to weave patterns with a variety of materials. Children develop their imagination through listening to music and very well told stories. They enjoy interacting with each other in imaginative role-play areas such as the shop, minibeast adventure area or the plane, which are linked to topics of study. All children participate very well in singing and thoroughly enjoy making music with percussion instruments, especially those in the outside area.
67. Teaching is successful because good links are made with learning in other areas, such as literacy, science and visits from authors, musicians or artists. A story or a visiting artist or musician often acts as a stimulus for music making, role play, drawing and painting so that children already have good ideas about what they would like to achieve. The quality of interaction is better in the Nursery than in the Reception classes. Much that takes place in the Nursery is very good or excellent. In Reception classes, there is some very good practice but more often the quality is satisfactory. At times when the teacher is dealing with the whole class learning is often good but, at other times, the rate of working tends to fall away. For example, when too large a group were involved in a role-play area, opportunities for creative development were lost. There is an appropriate balance between adult-directed and child-initiated activities so that children can express their creativity.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 1

ENGLISH

Provision in English is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make very good progress throughout Years 1 and 2 and achieve very well
- Teachers have very high expectations and plan and organise their lessons very well
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good
- The management of pupils' behaviour is excellent
- Co-ordination of the subject is excellent
- Pupils would benefit from even more opportunities to practise their speaking skills

Commentary

Standards in national tests

68. In the 2003 national tests, reading standards were average, and writing above average when compared with the results attained in schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Pupils' entry standards into the school are very low, however, and results were well below average in reading and below average in writing compared with national expectations. A significant minority of pupils attained the higher level 3 in both reading and writing but less than are found nationally. Many more pupils attain level 1, the level below that expected, in both areas. The trend in results over the past five years is upwards and the improvement being made has been much greater than the gradual improvement in results nationwide.

Standards and achievement currently

69. Tracking data, lesson observation and pupils' work indicate that pupils are unlikely to attain standards this year as high as last. The school assessment records confirm this view, reflecting the pupils' attainment on entry. Although standards are well below the national expectation for reading and writing at the age of seven, pupils make very good progress over time, considering their very low baseline. The pupils' achievements are very good.
70. Pupils are progressing very well overall in their development of English, but the school has correctly identified speaking as an area of relative weakness. Pupils enter school with very low standards and, in the case of speaking and listening, exceptionally low in several cases. Staff have improved the use of role-play areas and have established listening zones in classrooms, both of which are helping learning. Listening skills improve greatly during the pupils' time in Years 1 and 2 because of the carefully structured and high quality teaching. Speaking skills are developed well but not as effectively as listening. Pupils tend to use very short unfinished sentences in their speech.
71. Reading is being taught every day in every lesson, which is resulting in excellent achievement. Pupils read in groups with their teacher, have individual reading books, which are taken home, and read to older children through the book buddy scheme, all of which are helping pupils to enjoy and appreciate text. There are some high attaining pupils. A Year 2 pupil, for example, had just finished reading *The Iron Man* and was able to retell the story very well. A high proportion of pupils are attaining well below average standards, and struggle to read and interpret the simplest language. The school encourages parents to become involved and an increasing proportion are, which is helping in the reinforcement of reading skills.
72. Pupils are expected to write independently from Year 1 and due to clear organisation and support they make excellent progress. The use of writing zones and writing in the role-play areas result in pupils writing independently and with a clear purpose. In both Year 1 and 2 classes pupils who had completed their work chose to go to the writing zone and write stories. The teachers have created an excellent environment, which is conducive to writing, and the structures that pupils need are being taught with great skill.

Teaching and learning

73. The quality of teaching observed was very good overall, ranging from good to excellent. Teachers' detailed planning includes clear objectives; work is carefully matched to the understanding of the pupils and it shows clear progression. Teaching assistants work effectively throughout the school, delivering activities which consolidate skills for pupils and support those with special educational needs in group work during lessons. Teaching assistants have been trained and run very effective intervention strategies under the direction of the teacher. Teachers are vibrant, energetic and have a love of the subject, which results in enthusiastic interested pupils. They have high expectations and model the use of language to a high standard. The use of interactive whiteboards by skilled teachers in all classes enhances learning and teaching. Working on the boards focuses the pupils on their learning whilst ensuring it is fun and interesting. Assessment is an integral part of the very good teaching and a very good tracking and monitoring system has been established. In the very best lessons marking is carefully used to identify the next steps for the pupil.
74. Teachers have a dilemma in that behaviour management has to have a very high priority in the school. This results in very tightly structured learning, but they also need to give the pupils every opportunity to use creative, extended language when speaking. In the context of the extremely successful behaviour management, the balance could be moved towards providing more opportunities for extended speaking. Pupils were not encouraged enough to speak in paired talking; questions by teachers were sometimes 'closed'; and pupils were not always encouraged sufficiently to ask questions of each other and the adults in the classroom. These were not major issues in any of the lessons seen, but pupils would benefit from greater emphasis being given to each of these areas. Guided reading sessions are focused and well organised, taking into account the interests of the group. For example, a group of boys was reading an information book about planes, which they found enthralling.

Leadership and management

75. The team leading and managing the teaching and learning of English work very closely together, generating excellent support and guidance and a very effective monitoring programme. A comprehensive and very helpful scheme of work has been written, which offers clear guidance to teachers. It is of an excellent quality. Up-to date policies are included, along with clear expectations and entitlements for pupils. The national literacy strategy medium term plans are incorporated, with agreed texts for each term and each year group. Assessment is frequent and rigorous and the results are carefully recorded. This information is then used to identify strengths and areas for improvement in pupils' knowledge. Lesson observations are carried out regularly with the result that teachers receive constructive criticism on the quality of their work. This approach reflects the whole school ethos of striving for improvement. There is a clear understanding of standards throughout the school and a good action plan focuses on raising achievement further.
76. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. There is now an excellent scheme of work and training is taking place to ensure that all staff understand how it can be used to guide them and ensure progression throughout the school. Assessment and tracking of pupils is thorough and marking has improved.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

77. Pupils' competence in language and literacy is well below average although their confidence in reading, writing and speaking and listening is improving and they are making very good progress in developing these important skills. All staff are promoting them very effectively across all subjects and the current focus on improved opportunities for speaking is helpful.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is excellent.

Main strengths

- The great energy and drive of the staff in lessons motivates the pupils to learn
- Pupils achieve extremely well because they enjoy the work and their behaviour is managed so successfully
- Individual pupils' work is checked very carefully so that pupils and teachers know what has been found to be easy and where more work is needed
- Pupils are arranged in teaching groups and classes for maths according to how successful they have been in learning the subject and this works very well
- Excellent use is made of interactive whiteboards in lessons
- Teachers use technical language carefully, helping pupils to understand and learn important terms

Commentary

Standards in national tests

78. Pupils' standards in the national tests taken at the age of seven in 2003 were above average when compared with results in similar schools. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level, level 3, was well above average compared with similar schools and similar to the national average for all schools. Pupils' entry standards into the school in mathematics, however, are very low indeed, and overall in the national tests, standards were well below average compared with all schools. Attainment is so low because such a high number of the pupils find maths difficult. There has been, however, a clear upward trend of improvement in national test results over the past five years.

Standards and achievement currently

79. Pupils are achieving extremely well currently, for their abilities, because of the excellent teaching they receive. Standards remain well below average compared with the national picture overall and are likely to be lower than in 2003. The school's own assessment information makes this clear. The most able use numbers confidently, recalling, for example, their three and five times multiplication tables when solving problems with money. They also distinguish between shapes such as hexagon, rectangle and square using the characteristics of these and other two-dimensional shapes. Low attainers struggle to recall even their two times table and are not always accurate in adding two single-digit numbers. Their recall of knowledge of simple shapes is slight. The school has a high proportion of pupils with very low and well below average standards, as well as a number of high attainers, and all do very well indeed considering their capabilities. Pupils who have special educational needs, about half the pupils in the school, do as well as others in their classes because work is at the right standard for them and support staff are very effective.

Teaching and learning

80. The excellent quality of teaching is the most important reason for the pupils' success in maths. The range in the quality of the lessons seen in Years 1 and 2 was from good to excellent, with several outstanding features in some lessons. Teachers prepare thoroughly and adapt their planning in the light of what does and does not work well. They drive themselves extremely hard in every lesson, enthusiastically praising pupils' efforts and reinforcing important facts. The very high quality learning support staff are very helpful, particularly in maintaining the momentum of the pupils' work during group work. The pupils respond very well, working very hard and co-operating with each other and the teacher. Reinforcement using different examples and approaches is carried out time and time again for the lowest attainers.
81. In an example of an excellent lesson, two and five times table problems presented using an interactive white board were given an extra dimension as the teacher challenged each pupil to 'beat her' in solving problems. The electronic board use was excellent, but it failed after some time because the digital projector placed on a table was inadvertently jogged by a pupil. A seamless change then occurred in the lesson and learning continued apace. This involved singing along with a puppet and rigorous questioning by the teacher. This proved to be extraordinarily effective. Puppets

are used frequently to reinforce routines and are very helpful in helping pupils to concentrate and learn. The management of pupils' behaviour was excellent.

Leadership and management

82. The leadership and management of maths are excellent. Curriculum planning is detailed, thorough and very helpful. The previous year's planning is held in central files to help new staff and those who have changed teaching groups. The pupils are arranged in classes by ability, forming a higher band and one or two parallel lower/mixed classes. Within classes, pupils are also grouped by ability. These arrangements are very helpful to the pupils, enabling work to be matched more easily to their needs. The quality of teaching is evaluated rigorously. Teachers are observed by senior managers and the subject co-ordinator, and oral and written constructive criticism is given to all observed staff. Assessment is excellent, regular and systematic, and the information is used to track individual pupils' progress. Staff are up to date and knowledgeable about the teaching and learning of maths and they make excellent use of the interactive whiteboard facilities available in most classrooms.
83. Since the last inspection, pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching have improved greatly and strengths in subject leadership and management have been maintained. Very good progress has been made since 1998.

Mathematics across the curriculum

84. The development of mathematical language and the use of number are promoted in most lessons in most subjects. The very high quality of teaching is the key element in the school's success in this work. Pupils' competence in maths remains well below average overall, in spite of the strong focus on it, and the very good progress pupils make during their time at Cotmanhay, because the pupils have so much to learn.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is very good.

Main strengths

- Science is very effectively integrated into half-termly topics, resulting in very good achievement
- The technical language of science is very well learnt
- A good balance of activities is provided across the areas expected in the National Curriculum

Commentary

Standards in teacher assessments

85. In the teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2003, pupils' attainment indicated that they had achieved very well considering their extremely low entry standard. Pupils had considerable strengths in their knowledge and understanding of areas such as materials, electricity and forces. Their area of weakness was in investigative work. Attainment was well below average overall.

Standards and achievement currently

86. High ability pupils have a good understanding of ideas such as healthy and unhealthy food, the growth of plants, and everyday changes such as those seen when making toast. They have confidence that they can make a switched circuit and could find out if an object was magnetic. Their standards are above average. There are also large numbers of low attaining pupils whose standards are very low. These pupils have very short-term memories, and in several cases few experiences out of school that could help to reinforce learning. Overall, standards are currently well below average. Pupils' achievements, however, are very good for their abilities, because they are very well taught and they try hard.

Teaching and learning

87. It was only possible to observe one lesson of science as the main emphasis in topic work during the inspection was on geography. The teaching and learning in the lesson observed were excellent. This, along with teachers' planning, assessment records and the quality and detail seen in the pupils' books, indicates that teaching and learning in science are very successful. In the lesson seen, the learning focused on knowing the language associated with the water cycle and appreciating how the

cycle works. The energy, vitality and drive of the teacher captivated the pupils, who responded with excellent behaviour and interest. The very low ability class, the majority of whom had special educational needs, worked extremely hard to learn technical terms such as evaporation. The lesson was very well structured with substantial repetition of important phrases. Learning support staff were very effective. The teacher was patient and gave great praise to the pupils for their effort, but was also extremely demanding.

Leadership and management

88. A team of staff lead and manage the subject very effectively. A senior manager is involved to help ensure that whole-school policies are followed carefully. Detailed planning, which is relatively complex because National Curriculum requirements are integrated into half-termly topics, is very good. Assessment records are very good, indicating what pupils do and do not understand. The school has a good supply of needed resources.
89. At the time of the last inspection teaching and learning in science were great strengths. Good progress has been made since that time, with maintained strengths in most areas.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) (Including ICT across the curriculum)

The provision for ICT is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The use of interactive whiteboards greatly enhances learning and teaching
- Staff have very good knowledge and understanding of ICT
- Pupils make less use of available computers than they could
- The digital projectors are not all securely installed which affects learning

Commentary

Standards and achievement currently

90. Pupils use interactive whiteboards with great confidence and skill in front of the whole class. They use text and images and share their ideas. For example, in a Year 1 class, pupils happily wrote on the board when focusing on spellings and in a Year 2 class, pupils highlighted and matched words, showing their degree of understanding. The stand-alone computers in the classrooms are used by pupils to practice skills in literacy or maths. They use suitable programs to draft and sometimes redraft their writing. Pupils do not always make full use of the computers in each classroom in a systematic and organised manner, with the result that their keyboard skills are weak, although many can enter, save and retrieve their work. Standards are well above average in some areas, such as in their confidence and understanding of the value of ICT, but overall standards by the age of seven are below average. Few of the pupils spoken to had access to computers at home. The whiteboard usage, however, ensures that pupils are making very good progress overall in developing their ICT skills and their achievements are very good.

Teaching and learning

91. ICT is an integral part of many lessons and teachers are skilled at using interactive whiteboards to enhance pupils' learning. Staff have very high order ICT skills. The use of the boards enable the pupils to remain focused on their work and the teachers ensure that it is fun and interactive. An excellent example was observed of the use of a board in a geography lesson, where two communities in India and England were compared. The images of the medical and educational facilities available in the two places captivated the pupils and challenged their perceptions. In many ways the quality of ICT teaching is very good, though opportunities are sometimes missed for using the individual computers in classrooms, particularly during group work. Pupils' progress is assessed extremely effectively.

Leadership and management

92. The area is very well led and managed. Teachers share ideas and teach each other new skills. In-service training in the use of this new technology is excellent. The purchase and use of the boards is of great benefit to the pupils. A good variety of software is available and more is being acquired,

following rigorous piloting of suggested packages. The classroom computer resource is not as systematically managed as other aspects. Additional ICT resources include a digital microscope and digital camera - both well used by the pupils – and listening zones in the classrooms where tape recorders are available. The use of ICT in teachers' planning is monitored and lessons are observed in order to identify good practice, but also to provide constructive criticism. Whiteboards fail in some classrooms and work is lost because of the sensitivity of table-based digital projectors to accidental jogging. This is a significant and very frustrating inefficiency when teachers have spent a substantial period of time preparing packages, which are then lost.

93. ICT resources are much better than at the time of the last inspection and the very good progress and teaching have been maintained. Improvement since 1998 has been good.

HUMANITIES

Religious education was inspected in detail. History and geography were sampled. Insufficient evidence was gathered in the sampled subjects to give an overall provision judgement.

Geography

94. One very good lesson was observed. Pupils' work was reviewed, and discussions held with pupils and about the co-ordination of the subject. The curriculum is very well planned to cover all aspects of the subject. All work is valued and sensitively presented so that pupils can feel proud of what they have achieved. Pupils learn through appropriately designed topics. Through visits to the local area and features such as the canal, pupils make connections between what they see and the pictorial representations on real and imaginary maps. Pupils are developing a sound understanding of places and maps. The topic of water combines scientific and geographic information so that pupils can see how areas of learning interlink. The excellent use of ICT to make comparisons between the communities of Cotmanhay and Chembokoli in India presented pupils with information in a very accessible form, which they assimilated very well. The pictorial representation met their learning needs in geography very effectively. The pupils' very weak reading skills did not restrict their access to the important issues presented. Good links are made with learning in other subjects such as science where a study of homes was linked to testing bricks. Literacy is developed through activities such as writing a letter to an Indian boy. The evidence seen in all the areas of geography inspected indicates that pupils enjoy the subject and are making very good progress, but their well below average literacy skills restrict the standards they can attain.

History

95. No history lessons were observed during the period of the inspection. Planning indicates that the subject has an appropriate allocation of time and that all areas of the required National Curriculum are taught. Pupils remember their visits to a local museum and castle with delight.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is very good.

Main strengths

- Pupils' achievements are very good
- Staff are very well prepared and have good subject knowledge
- Good use is made of visits and visitors to interest the pupils

Commentary

Standards and achievement currently

96. Pupils' achievements are very good because teachers persevere and reinforce important facts about religions, and pupils remember them, some much more than others. High attainers in Year 1 could remember reasons why people go to church. Some in Year 2 knew the Easter and Christmas stories well and recalled facts about Hinduism. Several of the pupils could only recall the main elements, however, and very few could suggest meanings of religious stories and language. The standard of the pupils' written work is well below that expected of pupils in Years 1 and 2, and many of the pupils' oral explanations include a very restricted vocabulary. Although a minority of pupils'

attainment is above average, the standards of many are below average, and overall standards are well below average.

Teaching and learning

97. The quality of teaching observed was very good overall; individual lessons ranged between excellent and good. Planning is detailed and helps to ensure that lessons contain a very good range of activities. Objectives are shared with the pupils and the use of good resources, including artefacts, keeps pupils interested. In the best teaching, pupils were encouraged to consider what religions tell us about how to behave towards other people. In an excellent Year 1 lesson, discussions centred round the use of the Bible by Christians and the Qur'an by Muslims. The frequent repetition of key phrases and ideas, excellent intervention by the learning support assistant to help very low attaining pupils, and outstanding preparation, effort and energy from the teacher, led to highly motivated pupils who made excellent progress. Standards remained well below average because so many pupils found the work challenging.

Leadership and management

98. The subject is excellently led and managed. A scheme of work has been written by the co-ordinator based on the locally Agreed Syllabus. This helps teachers to plan effectively and it enables pupils to experience the full range of work specified. The scheme is divided into two sections so that pupils learn about religious education and also how it relates to their lives. Teaching focuses on Christianity, Islam and Hinduism and links to the topic which is being studied. For example, cross-curricular links are identified in Year 2 between studying India in humanities and Hinduism. Staff have worked closely together to produce a method of assessment using high quality questions. This provides a very clear and informative record of pupils' achievements and standards. The use of visitors to the school enhances the learning experiences of the pupils as they learn first hand about celebrations like Diwali. A local curate regularly comes into school to talk about Christianity and the pupils visit the local church. Year 2 pupils are booked to visit the Hindu temple in Derby.
99. In 1998, at the time of the last inspection, teaching and progress were sound and religious education did not always receive sufficient emphasis. Today the quality of teaching and achievement are much better and the subject has an appropriate focus in each class. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

The four subjects of art, design and technology, music and physical education were all sampled. Insufficient evidence was gathered in these sampled subjects to make judgements about overall provision.

Art

100. One very good lesson of art was observed during the inspection where the high quality teaching led to rapid and substantial progress for all the pupils. They generated vibrant, well-presented work as they produced their own Indian wall hangings. Every pupil's work is valued so that art is a vehicle for raising self-esteem. Pupils with special educational needs and high attainers alike enjoy art and do very well. The curriculum is very well planned to give pupils a range of stimuli to be creative. ICT is very well used to present ideas through the use of the interactive white board. It is evident that pupils experience a range of materials such as hessian, fabric, tissue paper, clay, pastel and paint, and techniques such as collage, printing, tie and dye, weaving and stitching to create pictures and wall hangings. Art is used as a medium for extending pupils' technical knowledge through vocabulary such as form, line, texture and tone. Good links are made between art and other areas of the curriculum especially geography and music. The input from visiting artists enhances the quality and variety of work produced.

Design and technology

101. No lessons of design and technology were observed during the period of the inspection. A portfolio of evidence of pupils' work indicates that pupils use a range of materials in design and make activities. Design and evaluation forms are used to help pupils develop the necessary skills. Each year pupils are involved in a technology week involving a project, such as designing and making a model park.

The theme for the week is used most effectively to incorporate personal development, literacy and maths work as well as technology.

Music

102. In the two short sessions of music seen pupils enjoyed the challenge in their learning and concentrated very well to achieve maintaining a rhythm and the pattern of a hand jive. The very well planned music scheme gives continuity in building skills of composition and performance across the school from the Foundation Stage. Technical vocabulary is introduced at all stages so that pupils learn and understand musical terms. Very good links are made to geography, science and ICT. Pupils often interpret music through art work. For example Year 1 painted to music of "Mars" using strong colours and strokes, to reflect the quality of the sounds, but light, flowing strokes were used by Year 2 to indicate the mystical quality of "Scheherazade". Music achievement is very well monitored and evaluated through classroom observations and thorough assessments.

Physical education

103. One lesson of physical education and a sports club were observed, curriculum planning was reviewed, and discussions held with the co-ordinator and pupils.
104. In the lesson seen, the quality of teaching and learning was very good. Pupils changed quickly and warmed up very effectively, working to the rhythm of the music being played. The teacher and support staff both provided very good role models as they demonstrated actions to the pupils. The pupils were taught how to bowl a large ball and then practised the actions needed. Good practice was demonstrated by pupils and then others praised strengths and pointed out weaknesses in their friends' actions. Excellent support was provided for pupils who struggled with the task. The pupils' behaviour was very good indeed and they clearly enjoyed the session. Every opportunity was taken to reinforce speaking and listening skills, with, for example, discussions about the impact of exercise on the heart and the evaluative comments made by one pupil about another's bowling. The warm down session was as enjoyable for the pupils as other aspects of the lesson. Pupils' achievements during the period of just under the hour were very good.
105. Pupils' knowledge and skills are assessed carefully and the information is used to report to parents and to prepare for future work. An annotated portfolio of photographs of pupils carrying out physical education – dance, gymnastics and games – provides a very useful resource indicating what pupils can achieve. The subject leader observes colleagues teaching, and this helps to share what works well and what is less successful. A good allocation of time is made for physical education, with two substantial sessions every week in each class in Years 1 and 2. The subject is popular with pupils. The school hall, with a good range of gymnastic and games resources, is timetabled effectively. The sports club, which is held before school one morning each week, involves different groups of pupils each term. They enjoy a range of physical activities, including the development of football skills. How to live healthily is also taught during this club time.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship was sampled. Insufficient evidence was gathered to give an overall provision judgement.

Personal, social and health education and citizenship

106. Specific personal and social education lessons are taught, and work in the nurture room and special educational needs centre provides other incidental opportunities. In each of the sessions visited, the quality of teaching was very good and pupils were appreciated and valued. In one Year 2 lesson, images of different people were displayed on the interactive whiteboard as a way of getting the pupils to look for and discuss common characteristics, before moving on to what individual pupils considered to be important to them. This lesson was very effective in presenting the idea that what was important to one person might be unimportant to another individual, but this did not impact on what we thought of them. A similarly effective lesson for Year 2 focused on the importance of the language we use when speaking to one another about differences. Pupils' speaking and listening skills were very effectively developed throughout this session.

107. Each day all children and pupils in the school are provided with a piece of fruit at morning break. Most pupils eat the fruit and enjoy it, and staff use every opportunity to reinforce the importance of a healthy diet. Lunches are nutritious and very enjoyable, adding to the drive to teach the pupils to eat healthily.
108. Much of what takes place in the nurture room contributes greatly to pupils' personal and social education. A number of very disadvantaged, and in some cases extremely difficult, pupils are taught there for periods of time. Many of the pupils have extremely low language levels and concentration spans. About half the pupils involved come from Cotmanhay, and half from neighbouring schools. The environment where they are taught, although small in size, is of a very high quality. Books, ICT facilities, comfortable chairs and a high quality display show pupils that an investment is being made in them. The room is highly regarded by the pupils. Absolutely clear rules are explained to the pupils, which provide them with excellent 'structures' on which they can build their own routines. Behaviour management is very good. The support staff who run the centre show great tolerance for those that need time and patience. Those pupils who require a very tight disciplinary regime are also provided with what they need, though the tone of voice used to control their actions can be severe at times. Subject work is taught there, reinforcing tasks taking place in lessons, as well as the strong focus on personal development. Pupils who spend time in the blue room refer to how much they enjoy attending. The fruits of the work that takes place there are seen in happier, more communicative pupils, who have much higher self-esteem. This enables them to achieve much more in their class lessons.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	1
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	1
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	1
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	1
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	1
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	1
The effectiveness of management	1

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).